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ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

David R. Woodrell Earns MMR 337

Although his parents claim David Woodrell had an interest in railroads from infancy, his actual earliest recollection is of a short trip in the early 1950s. On that trip he rode a Southern Pacific local passenger train, supervised by his grandmother, from San Luis Obispo, Calif., to Santa Margarita, Calif. Although a relatively short ride, it included passage over Cuesta Grade and through several tunnels—all very interesting and exciting for a five-year-old. In those days the SP still had a lot of heavy steam working in central California and David can remember being very impressed with multiple cab-forward freight trains heading up over Cuesta. Given that experience it's no mystery why he was hooked at such an early age.

His interest in model railroading was a natural progression from this early fascination with trains. It was in what he calls the "Golden Age" (late '50s to early '60s) of the hobby that he got the bug. At that time, through the model railroad press, he was exposed to the work of John Allen, Jack Work, Paul Larson, Bill McClanahan and many others. The inspiration they provide survives in David today.

Unfortunately, the financial situation he enjoyed growing up did not permit him the luxury of brass engines and fancy power systems. He did, however, manage to cobble together a garage layout for a period of time and attempted some scratch building. With the onset of high school his interests turned elsewhere and his hobby efforts went in dormancy for a number of years.

After high school in the Scaramento area he returned to San Luis Obispo and attended California Polytechnic University (Cal Poly), earning a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Upon graduation he entered the Naval Flight Program and in May 1970 received his wings, eventually transitioning to the Grumman A-6 "Intruder" at N.A.S. Whidbey Island, Wash. David joined Attack Squadron 52, embarked on *U.S.S. Kitty Hawk*, and made two cruises to Vietnam.

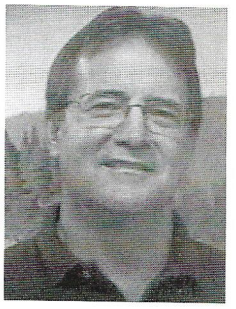
Following several years on active duty, he left the Navy to pursue a career with the airlines. In May 1977 he was hired by Hughes Airwest Airlines and, after two mergers, he now works for Northwest Airlines, serving as both an instructor and line pilot, flying the Airbus A330.

The rekindling of David's interest in model railroading actually occurred in the early 1980s, on an airline trip layover. While perusing a magazine stand he found an issue of *Model Railroader* that featured an extensive photo essay on the work of John Allen. Remembering the fascination he had as a kid with John's modeling skills, he was hooked again.

David's first efforts entailed freelance modeling of HO short-line railroading in the early years of the Seattle area. He built a small layout in his basement that he enjoyed, but was frustrated with the lack of room. In 1990, his family made the decision to move to a newly built home, which just happened to have a large, unfinished basement. Voila! David suddenly had the space he desired.

In the mid-80s he had become curious about a relatively obscure scale and gauge, Sn3. He had met a couple of local narrow gaugers building in that genre at the yearly PNR Model Railroad Show at the Seattle Center. Quickly intrigued by its possibilities, he decided to start over and switch scales. He has never looked back.

Once the move to a new home had been made, David had to force himself to wait before starting layout construction. Self-restraint prevailed and he spent the first year finishing the basement. As a result, he has not had to deal with construction dust and debris or worry about damage to models or scenes due to post construction hanging of lights or the ceiling. David emphasizes the importance of this room preparation to anyone he meets contemplating layout construction. The results are well worth the wait.



David chose to model the Rio Grande Southern in Colorado when he finally began construction. The beauty of the Colorado landscape, the spectacular feat of construction and the tenacity of the railroad all contributed to this decision. His layout depicts the RGS line from Ridgway to Rico, Colo., generally regarded as its Northern Division. A layout diagram, description of its construction and accompanying photos can be found in the Jul/Aug 2000 and Sept/Oct 2003 issues of the *Narrow Gauge And Short Line Gazette* magazine. Some of the highlights are as follows:

- All track is handlaid on individual ties.
- Engines—a combination of PBL and PFM imports, all equipped with DCC decoders and Soundtraxx sound modules.
- Layout powered by Lenz DCC system.
- Backdrops all hand painted.
- Structures a mixture of scratch built and modified kits.
- All trestles scratch built.
- Scenery 95% complete.

David generally enjoys the actual layout construction aspect of the hobby the most, but finds all areas interesting. Recently, due to exposure to some local modelers' layouts, he has become interested in operation and currently utilizes the program, "ShipIt" on his own layout. Operation provides a new dimension to the hobby, bringing to life the scenes depicted and providing the opportunity for a lot of fun. For those of you who haven't tried it, he heartily recommends you look for an opportunity.

He greatly enjoyed participating in the Achievement Program and encourages everyone to give it a try. Not only will it provide the chance to improve your modeling skills, it will also expose you to a lot of techniques used by others that you might otherwise miss out on. David has earned AP Certificates in Cars, Scenery, Structures, Prototype Modeler, Civil and Electrical Engineering, Model Railroad Author and Chief Dispatcher.

David and his wife, Michelle, reside in the Seattle suburb of Bothell, WA.

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